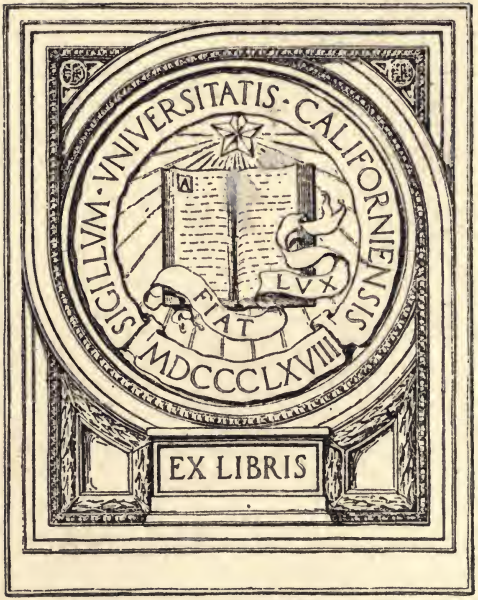
THE MASTER-SINGERS OF JAPAN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The Wisdom of the East Series
EDITED BY
L. CRANMER-BYNG
Dr. S. A. KAPADIA

THE MASTER-SINGERS OF JAPAN

WISDOM OF THE EAST

THE MASTER-SINGERS OF JAPAN

BEING VERSE TRANSLATIONS
FROM THE JAPANESE POETS

BY CLARA A. WALSH

LONDON
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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

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THE MASTER-SINGERS OF JAPAN

INTRODUCTION

IN times when everything relating to the history and literature of Japan has become of such vivid interest to the people of this allied Island-Empire, these attempted renderings into English of well-known Japanese poems may prove acceptable, especially to those who may not have time or opportunity to study the works of great Oriental scholars. The dainty grace and beauty of the original poems, with their impressionist word-pictures, are unfortunately easily lost in the endeavour to " English " them. It is scarcely possible to convey the full meaning of the shorter poems to English readers, without elaboration of the original theme, when at once they cease to be " Japanesque " ; just as the unerring instinct and delicate harmonies of Japanese bird and flower paintings would be ruined by over-

elaboration of details. Mr. Stewart-Dick has well said, "In art, the European requires that everything should be stated with the utmost fulness of a tedious realism, before he can grasp its meaning, but to the more cultured Japanese a mere hint or slight suggestion is sufficient." The majority of Japanese poems are little odes of five lines, of thirty-one syllables; some "Hokku" contain but seventeen. There are, of course, some of greater length, such as the "Naga-Uta" —Long Lays of the Manyôshiu. Wherever possible I have tried to give as literal a rendering as I could, but here and there an additional line has seemed necessary in order to convey the meaning to readers unacquainted with the original. Most of the earlier poems in the book are taken from the Manyôshiu, or "myriad leaves collection," an anthology of verse (to quote Mr. Dickins) "wholly Japanese in diction and phrasing . . . and exhibiting almost the oldest, perhaps the truest, certainly the most pleasing portraiture extant of the Japanese world in its archaic age." The exact date of its compilation is matter of controversy, some writers contending that it was compiled by Yakamochi (who died A.D. 785); others claim that Môroye (died 757) commenced the task, which was completed by Yakamochi. The dates of the Lays range from about A.D. 347 to 759, a period of over four hundred years. Some of the Lays appear to be elaborations of

still earlier poems, found in the Kojiki, or Ancient Annals, A.D 712, containing the mythology and primitive history of the nation. The following, from its pages, is said to be the oldest poem in Japanese language—the version is that of Mr. Dickins:

Lay attributed to the God of Eight Thousand Spears

Of spears countless, His Majesty the God,
In all wide Yashima He sought, but found no spouse.
In far-off Koshi, a virtuous damsel dwelt,
So heard the God—So went He, her well wooing,
His glaive in belt still girded, His veil unloosed.
"And here I stand," quoth He, her door to open!
The while the owl-bird screameth, the green hills midmost,
And moorland pheasant echoeth, and nigh her dwelling,
The cock too, loud he croweth!
I would these birds all
Would stop scream, call and crow,
These fowls too wretched
That fill the air with rumour!

Japanese poetry is wanting in narrative poems; even ballads are few and far between; political and (strange to say in so soldierly a race) war songs are mostly absent. Emotional poems and those dealing with the various aspects of nature form the majority, and except for the "Wasau" or Buddhist hymns, there are few of an exclusively religious character. The Nara period—eighth century—was the Golden Age of Japanese Poetry. Among the higher classes, the

art of verse-writing was universally cultivated. The poetry of the Nation was, however, almost exclusively written by, and for, the Court and officials; hence the subjects of many of the Lays, such as the journeyings of the Court to different capitals, elegies on the deaths of Royal Personages, love incidents of lords and ladies of the Court, the sending of officials to distant marchlands, etc.

Among the poets of this period stand conspicuous the "twin stars of Japanese poetry," Hitómaro and Akáhito, whose rival claims to supremacy are even yet undecided. There is a pretty story of the former told by Mr. Chamberlain of a warrior, Ayabe, who found a child of more than mortal beauty under a persimmon tree. Asked who he was, the child replied, "No father or mother have I, but the moon and winds obey me, and in poetry I find my joy." The boy was adopted, and became Kakinomoto (under the persimmon tree) no Asomi, Hitómaro, prince of Japanese poets. Scarcely less distinguished is Omi Okura, whose verses breathe a sturdy loyalty, perhaps tinged with the practical common sense of Confucianism, yet at the same time often echoing the higher sentiments of Buddhism. Then Yakamochi, compiler of the anthology of which his own charming and polished verse forms a most attractive part, and whose poetical correspondence with his friend Ikenushi gives us a

delightful glimpse into the life and literature of Court and official life in the eighth century. In the Fujiwara and Nara periods Confucianism and Buddhism became ruling influences in Japan, yet, with very few exceptions, there is little trace of the influence of either in the Manyôshiu. Not until much later do we find in the shorter poems or "Tanka" allusions to the impermanence of life, the vanity of egoistic desires, etc., as in the poems of Saigyō and Chōmei. The influence of Chinese learning, continuing up to the ninth century, temporarily checked the growth of native literature; but a revival took place in the reign of Mikado Dayo, A.D. 905, when Kino Tsurayuki and other poets were instructed to collect the anthology known as Kokinshiu. This collection, however, contains but five Naga-Uta—long lays; and from henceforward until the present day the poetry of Japan has been chiefly confined to Tanka or thirty-one-syllable poems. This of necessity cramped within narrow limits the poetic expression of the race; within such boundaries there was no room for the outpourings of a Shakespeare or a Milton. Yet within those limits what perfect word-paintings, what dainty impressionist sketches, what little gems of perfect fancy lie enshrined! and these in spite of certain conventions of choice of subjects, and the introduction of word-plays and pivot-words—no doubt of Chinese origin—which to a Western mind are

wearisome. I have already touched on the influences of Buddhism and Confucianism, but there is another pervading Japanese literature and poetry, far deeper and more permanent because indigenous to the race—the influence of "Yamato Damashü" (Soul of Japan): born in archaic days, it was fostered by the ancient beliefs of Shinto, gathering strength through the ages, till it found outward expression in "Bushido" (the Knightly Way). It breathes through the early Lays of the Manyôshiu, in whole-souled devotion to the Liege Lord, in passionate belief that Yamato is the land of the gods, chosen of the Sun Goddess—

> Of lands the fairest, of lands the most divine.

Later in innumerable Tanka, painting with loving touches the beauty of the cherry blossom, emblem of the warrior, and all the lovely mountains "whereon the high gods dwelt" within the Mikado's realm. It survives triumphant, through the stifling conventionalism of Chinese influences, sings to us in the eighteenth century, in the words of Motoori, "Shikishima no, Yamato Gokoro wo!" and rings out victorious and eternal in the swan-song of Hirosé, before Port Arthur:

> Would that I could be born seven times,
> To sacrifice each life for my Country.
> Resolved to die for it, my mind is firm,
> And again expecting to win success,
> Smiling I go on board!

I would like to express my deep sense of the debt of gratitude I owe to Mr. D. T. Suzuki, the distinguished Buddhist scholar, who most kindly volunteered to transcribe many of the poems into the Romaji for me, and further helped me by invaluable criticism. I also owe much to kind help given me by Mr. S. Uchida, whose translation of "Bushidō" is included in this book, and to the kindness of Professor Kanazawa. For many of the poems from the Manyôshiu and Kokinshiu, and "The Bamboo Flute," I am indebted to the prose and literal translations in the Japanese texts of F. V. Dickins, C.B., and W. G. Aston's "Japanese Literature." Other books consulted were those of the late Lafcadio Hearn, "Altjapanische Winterlieder," "Gramatzky," and Professor Chamberlain's "Things Japanese." Lay 78, Manyôshiu, "On Tanabata Night," "Blossom-time" and "Dragon-fly" poems, are included by kind permission of the proprietors of "T. P.'s Weekly," in which they originally appeared.

CLARA A. WALSH.

SOUTHSEA, 1909.

PRELUDE

I see the jewels sparkle on each spray
Of wind-swept moon-grass, as the reed-stems sway,
I try to clasp them—and they fade away
In ice-cold dew.

Against the turquoise of the April skies,
Pink haze of blossom o'er the landscape lies,
I try to pluck it—and its beauty dies,
The petals fall.

I hear a music thrilling time and space,
Heart-songs of Poets of a hero race—
I try to sing them—and their dainty grace
Eludes me still!

ON THE VIEW FROM MOUNT KAGU

(From the "Manyôshiu")

BY THE MIKADO JOMEI—A.D. 629–41

Land of Yamato! of thy myriad hills,
Peerless and fair stands forth this Heavenly mount
Of high Amenokagu, from whose height,
Climbing its lofty brow, I stand and gaze
On the far-stretched champaign, whence faint blue smoke
Curls from a thousand dwellings, to the skies—
On the sea-plain, always the circling gulls
Rise flight on flight, and hover in the blue;
"Land of the Dragon-fly!" O Land to love!
Of rich abundance, and of fertile grain!

LOVE-LAY INDITED BY THE MIKADO TEMMU

A.D. 673–86

(From the "Manyôshiu")

Lo! on Mikané's heights,
In fair Yoshino's Land,

Tireless the snow alights
On winding mountain ways;
There the fierce-driven rain
Ever its rage displays.
So, just as, ceaselessly,
Snow and rain fall,
Dwell all my thoughts on thee,
Loved above all!

SPRING AND AUTUMN

(From the "Manyôshiu")

By Princess Nukata—A.D. 673–76

Now cometh Spring, all lightsomeness,
From the ice-chains of Winter free,
And birds, whose songs erstwhile were mute,
Flood all the woods with melody.

The glades where late no blossom showed,
Hills that were bare, are decked with flowers,
But, in the tangle of the woods,
I can scarce reach the songsters' bowers.

Matted and thick with twining growths,
Out of my reach the sweet buds blow,
While in the Autumn, undeterred,
I thread the copse, where red sprays glow.

Thrusting the duller browns aside,
Choosing the tints with flame alight,
Give me the Autumn hills that bring
Deep breaths of pleasure and delight!

HITÓMARO—KAKINOMOTO NO ASOMI

Known as the Prince of the Manyôshiu poets. Was said to be descended either from the Mikado Kōshō (B.C. 475–393), or the Mikado Bidatsu (B.C. 572–85). He served under the Queen-regnant Jito—A.D. 690–6—and the Mikado Mommu (697–707). He travelled with Prince Nihitabe over a large part of Japan, and composed many poems—A.D. 673–86. He died at Ihami.

ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

(From the "Manyôshiu")

By Hitómaro

When hand in hand, we two did wend
Adown the paths of Life our way,
And from the dike's ridge yonder, gazed
On the dense elm-trees' green array,
From out whose leafy canopy,
Glimpsed here and there, our cottage eaves;
Then were our tender thoughts of love,
Frequent as are the fresh spring leaves
Upon the tangled boughs.

Leaning on thee ; my very soul
Rested in perfect trust on thee.
Sad is the doom that none may shun,
Mournful the fate that none may flee !
Over the far-flung purple moor,
'Midst the white funeral banners borne,
Slowly they take thee, thou who rose
With the wild-fowl at break of dawn,
And they must hide thee far away,
As sunset-hills hide out the day.
Thy little son, a memory
Of thy dear self, weeps bitter tears,
And seeks for comfort in my arms.
I fondle him, to soothe his fears ;
But with a man's unskilful hand,
Lacking the tender touch that cheers.
Our chamber, now so desolate,
Where once all close our pillows lay !
The night is filled with loneliness,
And sorrow darkens all the day.
I know thou sleepest on the hill
Of the cock-crowing, but in vain
I climb its steep and stony heights,
Nor one dim moment shall again
On her, who living, I loved best
These eyes of mine adoring rest !
Homewards I turn, and in our lonely room,
Without the alcove, in the silent gloom
My gaze falls on thy pillow !

ENVOY

Still the fair moon illumes the Autumn night,
As when last year we marvelled at its light,
But between thee and me, a year's whole space,
That one past year divideth !

ON PRINCE NAGA'S GOING A-HUNTING ON THE MOOR OF KARIJI

BY HITÓMARO

My Prince, who rules in peaceful power,
Child of the Sun-orb shining high,
Hath ta'en his horses and his men
To where the stag and wild-fowl lie.
On wild Kariji's grassy moor,
He setteth forth to chase the deer.
As the stag boweth—knees to ground,
So do I, bowing low, revere ;
As the quail creepeth through the grass,
I tender service to my Lord,
Lifting mine eyes as to the sky,
Sun-bright and shining as a sword—
Eyes like a polished mirror bright,
Loyal and true—reflect the light.
Is he not brave, my Prince ! and fair
As the Spring-blossoms, debonair !

ENVOY

See how the Hunter's Moon, full-orbed,
Crosseth the heavens with shining light;
We will draw down the moon with cords,
To form his canopy to-night.

ON PRINCE KARU'S RETIREMENT TO THE MOOR OF AKI, TO MEDITATE

(From the "Manyôshiu"—Lay 12)

BY HITÓMARO

He, Heaven-descended of the Shining One
Who dwells divine, bright Goddess of the Sun!
He hath forsaken circumstance and state
Of royal cities, and, unhesitate,
Hátsusé's hill-encircled wilds reviews,
The pathless steeps, the forest ways pursues—
When morning dawns, with waking wild-birds' cry,
When in the West the burning sun-fires die,
Faring; till on the moor of Aki, white
With fallen snow, the grasses tall and slight
Of plumed susuki, brusheth he aside,
To sleep on the grass-pillow, there to bide.
And, far from pageantry and regal state
On the past days to muse and meditate!

ON PARTING FROM HIS WIFE

By Hitómaro

Not yet, O Hill! high hill of Autumn scatter
Red leaves and gold athwart the distant view.
Let me gaze on, a little instant longer,
Where she I love leans toward me through the blue!

ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE AT KARU

(From the "Manyôshiu"—Lay 27)

By Hitómaro

By Karu's road, where high the mallard fly,
In her own home-place did my love abide,
And all my soul with deep desire did sigh
To see her and to linger by her side.
But prying eyes too constant visits barred,
And eyes too many made our meetings few.
Yet did I trust—tho' long the ways and hard,
Endless as trailing creepers—yet anew
To meet my love. All hopeful did I trust,
As to his tall ship trusteth seaman bold,
While still our love was hid, as deep pool thrust
'Mid rocks whose hearts hold fire, tho' outward cold.

* * * * *

Alas! the sun is darkened in my sky!
The moon that lit my heav'n is hid from view.
Graceful as sea-fronds that in green deeps lie,
My love, like Autumn's pride of leaf and hue,
Out of my world has vanished, as the dew!

. . . . .

Such are the tidings that the runner brings,
White-wanded messenger whose words I hear—
They pierce me, as the arrows from the strings
Of white-wood bows—the words that sting and sear!

. . . . .

Nor answer find I, neither comfort gain.
Yet, to assuage a thousandth part my woe,
Karu-wards wending, full of grief and pain,
I listen for her accents sweet and low,
Her voice I list for—but alone I hear
The wild-fowl screaming as they take their flight
Across Unebi, to the shining mere.
No form with sleeves uplifted greets my sight—
The thronging folk upon the way I meet,
Scanning their faces, but I never see
A face like hers—and so with weary feet
I stumble on in hopeless misery.
Onward I wend, and can but cry again
The loved one's name, and wave my sleeve in vain!

ENVOY ON DEATH OF HIS WIFE

By Hitómaro

Fain would I seek among the winding hill paths,
Where ruddy clouds of foliage hide the ways,
Her whom I love, who wanders ever further ;
But all unknown the pathway where she strays !

AKÁHITO-YAMABENO

Flourished about A.D. 700

One of the earliest distinguished poets of Japan. He was the rival of Hitómaro. He accompanied the Mikado Shomu to Kii ; and afterwards visited the Eastland, where he composed the well-known lines to Fuji.

ON WAKA'S SHORE

By Akáhito—7th Century

On Waka's shore
The tide comes flowing.
No resting-place
Above the waters showing.
Towards the reeds
The cranes are swiftly flying,
All the night sky
Resonant with their crying.

ON VIEWING FUJI

By Tago's shore, I wander to and fro,
Gazing on Fuji's peak, where Autumn's earliest snow,
White-gleaming, sparkles.

ON PASSING THE TOMB OF THE MAID OF MAMA

By Akáhito

Fair was the Maid who dwelt in olden time
In Mama village—and well wooed was she.
Exchanged were Shidzu girdles. Bride-hut built,
And here among dense maki leafage hid,
There lay her tomb.
Long as the pine endures, her piteous tale,
The record of her sorrows shall endure
Engraven on my heart compassionate.
Still the smooth sea-wrack floats upon the tide,
In the clear waters of Kátsushika.
How oft the shining tendrils from the sea
Hath the fair maid of Mama gathered!

LAY ON THE RUINED CHAPEL OF TAKECHI *

By Kamo no Kimitari-Hito

The Spring mists hover round the hill,
The Hill of Kagu, where of old
The Gods descended, sacred still.
The pine-breeze murmurs through the wold;
A little ripple grows, and fades,
As the light air the clear pool stirs.
The cherry blooms still star the glades,
Mist-wreaths of blossom 'mid dark firs.
The wild duck seeks his mate, the teal
Rise from the reeds on whirring wings,
But on the lake no cleaving keel
Over the shining water swings.
Empty, the pleasure-barges lie,
Oarless and desolate they float;
No more for waiting courtiers ply,
As in Imperial days remote.

Envoy

On the straight cedar-shafts the moss grows green,
Witness how long this solitude has been!

* The son of Mikado Temmu, and a valiant warrior; died A.D. 696.

BY THE WIDE SEA

(From the "Manyôshiu"—Lay 78)

By Kuramochi no Asomi Chitosē

By the wide sea, wherein the great whales dwell,
Pleasant it is to wander o'er the shore,
And watch the seaweed tendrils undulate
In the green depths translucent, to and fro.
Fair 'tis to see the thousand ripples gleam,
In endless sequence in the morning calm;
And in the eventide to watch the curves
Of myriad wavelets breaking ceaselessly;
While always from the depths of ocean rolls
Through months and years the ever-heaving swell.
Pleasant it is on Suminoyé's strand
To watch the great white combers break in foam!

SIGHS

The mists that drift across the hill—
High Hill of Ohonu—
They are my sighs that hover chill,
Of sorrow born across the hill—
High Hill of Ohonu!

A LOYAL WISH

By Tanobe Sakimaro

(From the "Manyôshiu"—A.D. 744)

Gentle the rise of wooded hills,
The rapid's murmur pleasant falls,
With rippled song and rushing trills
There by Futagi's Palace walls,
Where our great Prince and sacred Lord
Rules as he wills.

Long as in Spring, when soft and clear,
The warblers' liquid love-song flows,
Upon the rocks resplendent flung,
The rich brocade of blossom glows,
Brightening the sombre mountain-foot
With gold and rose.

Long as in Autumn when afar
Unto his mate the proud stag calls,
From the brown boughs, a crimson star,
Trailing to earth, the red leaf falls,
Hurt by the rainy gusts that sweep
Through Heaven's blue halls.

So while a thousand years go by,
Still may His life endure, august,
While the great Palace shall defy
Ages where Empires turn to dust.
Still may the Gods preserve His sway
Imperial, just!

LINES TO A FRIEND

(Lay 117 from the "Manyôshiu"—A.D. 728)

Heavy the burden of this Life to bear!
By some strange chance we come into this world;
Yet, live or die, for us one Duty still
Shines through the dark perplexities of earth,
Obedience to the bidding of our Lord!
Therefore, O friend! while yet thy mortal frame
Dwells in this world, liege-loyal must thou bide
To thy great Sovereign—thou who farest forth
Guard to the distant frontier far away,
With a great company—as wild-fowl flock,
Winging their flight in the pale shine of Dawn!
Forget not thou, in far-flung wilds thy friend
Left far behind in the City-Royal here,
Whose love is thine, tho' long thine absence be!

Envoy

To Koshi as thou farest, crossing hills
Steep and snow-clad, thy friend remember still
Who, left behind, ever remembers thee!

ON THE ASCENT TO HEAVEN OF THE MIKADO

(From the "Manyôshiu")

By one of the Ladies of the Court

I may not follow where my Lord
Blissful ascends to Heaven's high plain,
But, far from Him whom I adored,
My sleeve is wet with bitter rain—
Earthly and mortal I abide
From His dear Presence sundered wide.

Were I a jewelled ornament,
A vesture, an embroidered sleeve,
I had not been so rudely rent
From Him I saw but yester-eve
In a dream-vision—Heaven-sent.

YAKAMOCHI

Ohotomo no Sukune Yakamochi was a noble of the Ohotomo clan. He held high rank at Court, being made Daishi—great teacher—an honour conferred upon learned and virtuous persons. To him probably is due the collection of poems of the "Manyôshiu"—to which his own poems form a considerable and valuable contribution. He died September 785 A.D. Professor Dickins says, "His poetical correspondence with Ikenushi is a most interesting example of the literary life of the court and official world of the eighth century."

THE CUCKOO AND WISTARIA

MAY 19TH, 750 A.D.

See the fair maid expectant stand,
All in the golden morning light.
Mirror-case held in tiny hand,
Whose lids have veiled its surface bright.
Peach-tinted cheeks and smile-curved brows,
Graceful as arching willow boughs.

On the high twin peaks of the hill,
Through the mist-scattered deep green vales,
Loud rings the cuckoo's note and clear,
Or near the moonlit moorland wails.
Darts he through rippling fuji-blooms,
Through the wing-shaken perfumed showers
Of scattered petals. Thence I cull
A fragrant spray of well-loved flowers.

The purple wavelets in my sleeve
I place—and if, all fair to see
Yet they should stain its surface bright,
What care I ? Purple let it be !

THE PEARLS OF AWABI

WHICH HE WOULD FAIN SEND TO HIS WIFE, AT THE ROYAL CITY

By Yakamochi—June 5th, A.D. 749

In the great Sea-god Susu's realm
The divers brave the awful deep,
There the awabi's gleaming pearls
Pluck from the shadows where they sleep.

Would that a hundred pearls were mine,
Hundreds of gleaming orbs to twine
And send to thee, where thou dost pine
In Royal City desolate !
Where the nights pass in dreary round,
And thou, with tresses all unbound,
The days of parting countest !
Lonely our alcove—still apart
Our sleeves—and thou with weary heart—
The creeping days, thou countest ?

Pearls I would send, that thou shouldst find
Solace in twining them to bind
Garlands of orange-blossom white,
Dark leaves with golden fruit alight,
And sweet-flag flowers,
In this fifth moon-month when by day
And night the cuckoo sings his lay.

THE NEW YEAR

(Last Lay of the "Manyôshiu")

By Yakamochi—New Year's Day, Feb. 2nd, A.D. 759

'Tis the New Year.
Already dawneth Spring, with promise bright.
On our dear Land may countless blessings light,
As countless as the snowflakes that are falling!

THE PINK AND THE LILY

(Part of Lay 232, "Manyôshiu")

By Yakamochi—July 16th, A.D. 749

To soothe my heart, afar from thee,
A wild pink from the green hillside
I planted in my garden court.
Then, for its flower-spouse I brought
A lily from the moorland wide.
So should their hues and fragrance be
Together mingled.

As side by side, I watch them grow,
It calms my sorrow,
Else, heaven-far from thee, I know
I could not, could not stay
One more brief day,
But fain must seek thee on the morrow!

ON THE CUCKOO SINGING IN ANOTHER'S GARDEN

By Yakamochi—June 2nd, A.D. 750

Within thy garden lies
A sheltered dell where alders grow,
From thence to morning skies
The cuckoo's notes unceasing flow,
And every eve, far, far away
Among the Fuji trails
Purple with bloom, his roundelay
Of joyance never fails.
But in my garden here,
Though orange-flowers unwithered blow,
No cuckoo ventures near,
Nor song doth he bestow!
Why tells he to thine ear
The tale I may not know?

YAKAMOCHI AND HIS HAWK

PART OF LAY SENT TO HIS WIFE IN THE CAPITAL

From friends and kin apart,
In lonely wilds I pined,
And solace to my heart,
A-hawking sought to find.
Ihasé's moor towards
Where the bush-clover grows,
Over the Autumn sward
Gaily my party goes.
Men through the wooded dells
Beating for wild-fowl press,
While my hawk's silver bells
Tinkle with eagerness.
With that sweet music near,
Gazing on wide-spread view,
Gone are my musings drear,
Gladness is born anew!
Now in our chamber here,
Where our twin-pillows lie,
My dappled falcon dear
Perches his master nigh.
Here dainty bits I bring,
Here smooth his mottled wing!

IMPERMANENCE

(Lay 238 from the "Manyôshiu")

By Yakamochi—April 20th, A.D. 750

Since that far day when Heaven and Earth were new,
Plain to mankind hath been the certainty
That this our world is all impermanence.
Gaze on the heavens, and mark the gleaming moon,
That ever waxes, evermore to wane.
The steep hillsides, tree-clad, flow'r-wreathed in Spring,
Are fair with blossom ; but the Autumn comes,
The cold dew falls, and hoar-frosts' searing touch
Sets the hillside aflame with ruddy leaves—
The red leaf falls, and leaves the branches bare !
So with mankind. Too soon the youthful cheek
Loses its freshness, and the jetty hair
Changes its shining darkness into grey.
The smiling morn turns to the tearful eve,
As the wind blows, unseen of mortal eye.
As the tide flows, nor for an instant stays ;
So all things pass, and all are mutable,
And I—I weep, and cannot stay my tears !

YAKAMOCHI TO HIS WIFE

Together dwelt my Lady-wife and I,
And with the years so grew our mutual love,
While each new Spring, when on the earliest flowers
We gazed together, so in form and soul
She seemed to draw new loveliness herself
From their young beauty—Wife ! so far from me !
When, in obedience to my Sov'reign Lord,
I crossed through frowning passes thick with trees,
And o'er wild moors, to frontiers heaven-far.
Since we were parted, months have come and gone,
The cherry-flowers have bloomed and passed away,
And thou, sweet wife ! not one short glimpse of thee
My heart has gladdened ! Sorrowful and wan
Each night my sleeve I backward turn, if so
Haply in dreams to see thee ! Yet I would
Thy very self, and not thy dream-form see.
Would I could seek thee, and the long night through
Make thy white arm my pillow.—But alas !
Long lie the spear-ways, as a barrier
Parting us, till a happier time be ours !
Ay ! when the cuckoo blithely singing comes,
In his own month (ah ! would that it were here !)

When all the hills are white with hare-bush blooms,
Then shall I gaze across the shining space
Of Omi's waters, to our distant home ;
Nara, the City-Royal, and our home !
Like the sad Nuyé bird, impatient too,
I shall set forth, my eager heart and soul
One great glad longing for the sight of thee !
Sight of thee standing in our doorway dear,
Listening to passing words as oracles,
Searching with earnest gaze the distant road
(Sad, at the evening shadows lengthening)
For me who come apace to meet my love ?

CHINESE POEM

By Yakamochi

Written when ill, in answer to Letter and Verses from his Friend Ikenushi, April 8th, A.D. 748

Fair is the land in waning Spring,
The light wind passes like a sigh,
Swift through the blue on sweeping wing
The swallow, clay in beak, goes by.
Gladly he darts through shadowing leaves
To his house-building 'neath the eaves.
To the wide ocean far away
The wild geese, reeds in bill, take flight,
Streaming across the moonlit bay
Through the vast silence of the night.

You write, "I sing, where old friends throng,
New songs, and, duly purified,
I drink and pass the cup along,
Adrift upon the crystal tide."
Glad would I join your feast. Alas!
Weak from disease I may not pass
To revel by your side!

PLUM-BLOSSOM

By Yakamochi

Boldly the white plum-blossoms raise
Their fragrant beauty through the haze
Of winter gloom, where sleet and snow
Contending, round my dwelling blow.

A HERO

By Yakamochi

A hero's fame should so established stand,
That through the endless ages yet to be
His name should thrill, inspiriting and grand,
Upon the lips of far posterity!

BY IKENUSHI TO HIS FRIEND YAKAMOCHI, THE POET, WHO WAS LYING ILL

In dread obeisance thy way
To distant Marchlands didst thou wend,
O'er craggy hill and barren waste ;
A loyal liege-man thou, O friend !
'Tis true thou liest all alone
On bed of sickness close-confined,
Full of sad thoughts, but such the way
Of this poor world, time beyond mind !
What say our neighbours, that may cheer
Thy saddened thoughts, beloved friend !
They say, on all the hillsides bloom
The sprays of cherry, that down-bend
With shining blossom 'mid whose snows
Ceaseless the warblers' love-lilts ring,
While o'er the moorland wander maids
Plucking the violets of Spring ;
Neatly they fold their shining sleeves,
Lift their red skirts above the dew,
And wait with heartfelt sympathy,
For thee to pluck the flowers anew.
Cheer thee, O brother, Spring is young,
And ere it fades, thou yet shalt share
The revels of its blossom-time,
The fragrance of its perfumed air !

OMI OKURA

Little personal is known of him. In A.D. 701 he joined the Embassy to China of Ahada no Ason Mabito, as under-secretary; in 721 he returned to Court and held office in the Eastern palace. Later he was appointed guardian or tutor to the Crown Prince, and afterwards governor of the province of Chilkuzen. He died in 733, aged 74. His poetry is perhaps the most vigorous and natural of all in the "Manyôshiu."

"TO BRING BACK THE FROWARD IN THE RIGHT WAY"

WRITTEN ON 21ST OF THE 7TH MONTH OF THE YEAR 729 A.D.

With honour shalt thou treat alway,
Father and mother, first of all,
Then for thy wife and children care,
Nor fail thy duty to recall
To elder brother—nor to age
Cease to give all respect as due.
Nor to the friend who calls thee friend
Fail to be ever leal and true.

Such is the world-way, and, my friend,
Thou art enmeshed within those ways,
Nor knowest thou where thy life stream
Shall carry thee in coming days.
If thou mere human duties scorn
As a worn sandal cast aside,
Thou art no man, but stock-stone-born,
Lost in a selfish, senseless pride.

If thou couldst mount to Heaven's high plain,
Then thine own will might be thy guide,
But here on earth thou needs must dwell,
Here where our Sov'reign's rule is wide.
Under the sun and moon, as far
As the high clouds of Heaven glide,
Down to the toad's constricted realm,
All doth our Sov'reign's will abide,
Under the Sun and Moon—so wide!
So shall thy wayward will not sway
Thy conduct here!

ENVOY

The ways of shining Heaven are far:
Turn thee! ah! turn to things yet near;
Turn to thy earthly home, O friend!
And try to do thy duty here.

ON TANABATA NIGHT

The shining flood of Heaven's River gleams,
A scarf of silver flung on utmost blue,
And on the shore whereby its radiance streams,
The lonely herdsman feels his grief anew.
Since those far days when all the world was young,
For weaver-maid his longing soul has pined,
And gazing on that flood his heart is wrung
With burning love-thoughts, passion undefined.

Fain would he cross in fair red-painted barque,
Furnished with trusty oars begemmed with spray,
To cleave the flood with level keel at dark,
Or with calm tides to cross at break of day.
So stands the lover by those waters wide,
Gazing all-piteous at the arching sky,
So stands he by the far-flung shining tide,
Gazing with many a heart-despairing sigh,
And waves her scarf, with which the wild winds play,
His arms outstretched, his soul with love afire,
While still the lagging Autumn makes delay,
Nor swift wings bridge the path to his desire!

THE GIFT

(From the "Manyôshiu")

He rode towards Yamashiro,
That woman's lover on his steed,
And I, who saw him proudly go,
Sorrowed, to think my Lord had need
To go afoot, while *he* rode by!
Heart-vexed, I took my mirror fair—
Bright-shining mirror, precious gift
Of her who nursed me—from my hair
Unbound, with trembling fingers swift,
My wimple winged like dragon-fly,
And bade my Lord to take them all
And buy a steed forthwith!

THE MOON-LORD'S ELIXIR

(From the "Manyôshiu")

Let the great mountains' lofty pinnacles
Tower, till they touch the Ladder of the Skies,
Up which ascending, to the Moon-Lord's realm
Thence I may bring all humbly to my lord
Elixir for renewal of his youth,
In fadeless beauty and undying strength!

THE GHOST

It is an awesome thing,
To meet a-wandering,
In the dark night,
The dark and rainy night,
A phantom greenish-grey,
Ghost of some wight,
Poor mortal wight!
Wandering
Lonesomely
Through
The black
Night!

A MOTHER'S FAREWELL TO HER SON

DEPARTING FROM NANIHA ON A MISSION TO CHINA

E'en as the hart, who ardent woos his mate
When the bush-clover opens purple blooms,
Hath one son only, even thus am I
Mother of only one, who even now
On a far journey fares, in a strange land,
With but, perchance, grass-pillow for his head.
Wherefore close-threaded beads of bamboo rings
And brimming jars of saké I set forth,
And shining yufu cloths, before the shrine,
Praying the mighty God, with humble prayers,
To bring my loved one safely home to me!

A LAMENT

(From the "Manyôshiu")

In the upper reaches of the river,
Hatsusé's secluded upper reaches,
Dive the eager cormorants, respondent
To the will and bidding of their keepers.
In the lower waters cormorants diving
Many shining fishes let to swallow.

Fair and bright was she who now is lying,
Parted from me, a full bow-shot, lying,
And my heart is burdened down with sorrow,
Full of thoughts of her and full of sorrow.

Rudely torn may be a hempen mantle,
Yet a skilful hand may join it fitly;
Snapped may be the string where pearls are threaded,
Yet the thread all swiftly be re-knotted;
But, my dear one, you and I once parted
Never more may meet—ah! nevermore!

A LAY OF COMPLAINT

By the Lady Sakanohe no Isatsune

My Lord had vowed that with deep constancy
Firm-rooted as the sturdy sedge that grow
In the clear pools of Naniha—so he
Would love and guard me through the golden years.
I gave my heart to him (ah! foolish heart!
Yet stainless as a mirror's burnished face)—
Into his keeping, and on him I leaned,
Trusting in him, as sailor in his ship—
Nor, as the drifting seaweed to and fro,
Backwards and forwards in the swirling tides,
Has my love wavered from that very hour!
Yet now, perchance, the mighty gods have willed
To part us twain. Or is it evil words
Of envious mortals? For he comes no more,
My Lord who came so often! neither sends
White-wanded messenger to tell me why.

From the red dawn until the dense night falls,
And all the hours of darkness through I weep
Hopeless and helpless. Plain for all to see
My misery, and weeping like a babe,
I wander forth, nor waiting, dare to hope
For word or message from the one I love!

DROWNED

(Lay 194 from the "Manyôshiu")

No bird-songs at dawn-breaking, sound by the
lonely sea,
Where sleeps he, never waking;
Behind him, faintly looming, the solemn moun-
tains lie;
Before him, waves dull booming.
On shining seaweed pillow, he rests on pebbly
shore,
Drenched by each wind-tossed billow.
Not even mantle closing, with wings of dragon-fly,
Around his form reposing.
All lone he lies, as sleeping forgetful of the world,
Of laughter or of weeping.
Once loved him—Father, Mother, haply young
wife and fair
Loved him above all other.
But never word of greeting, from him to them
shall pass,

Nevermore place of meeting!
Vainly a message seeking, homeplace and name tell not
Lips like a babe's unspeaking.
Piteous the sight, heart-rending, but such the world's sad way,
All things to silence tending!

TO A LADY CROSSING A BRIDGE ALONE

(From the "Manyôshiu")

Fair lady, tripping o'er yon bridge,
Spanning the foaming river's bed,
Who, scarlet-robed with mantle blue,
Crosses the lacquered arch of red—
I wonder, as I watch your form
All unattended and alone,
If in your homeplace gallant spouse
Claims your sweet beauty as his own;
Or if like single acorn, still
Unmated and forlorn you pine!
And nameless still, and still unknown,
Your name and dwelling would divine.

IN AZUMA *

(From the "Manyôshiu"—8th Century)

In Azuma
To grace the Imperial Reign
All gold the flowers grow
In Azuma.
On all the heights of Michinoku glow
The glittering blooms.
Imperial eyes might deign
To glance upon the precious flowers that grow
In Azuma!

A WISH

(From the "Manyôshiu")

By Prince Aki, A.D. 740

On Isé's sea
The white foam-blossoms play.
Would they were blooms
From out whose fair array
Choosing the best
I might select a spray
For her I love!

* Azuma—an eastern Province of Japan whose mountains contain gold and mica.

THE MOON'S VOYAGE

By Prince Aki

The Moon is a barque on the sea of the skies,
Where stormy and grey the cloud-billows arise.
Nor tempest, nor calm, her serenity mars
As she glides on her way to the groves of the stars!

WILLOWS

Now ere the rough caress
Of the Spring breeze has tangled carelessly
The young green willows' slender silken threads,
Now would I show them in their fresh young grace
Unto my love!

BLOSSOM-TIME

Not yet is past the cherry's blossom-time;
Yet should the petals fall,
Now, while their beauty's moon is at the full,
And all the love of those who gaze on them
Is at its zenith——

SUGIWARA NO MICHIZANE—TENJIN

A great minister and scholar; after holding high office, was banished as Governor of Kyūshū, and died in A.D. 903. His death was said to have been followed by evil portents and disasters to his foes. He is worshipped as a God of Calligraphy—and plum-trees are planted near his temple, his crest being plum-blossom.

THE OFFERING

By Sugiwara no Michizane

I carry to the Shrine no offering
This Autumn day,
Fairer than any gift that I could bring,
The rich display
Of gold and crimson on Tamuke's side.
The gods can revel in the maples' pride!

SPRING SHOWERS

By Fujiwara Toshiyuki

Through flow'ring branches
Pour the sudden showers,
Warm showers through branches
Sweetly blossoming.
What if they soak me,
So the glistening flowers
Let me partake
Their fragrance of the Spring!

KINO TSURAYUKI

THE POET, AND EDITOR OF THE "KOKINSHIU"

He was a Court noble, and of royal descent; he died in A.D. 946. His preface to the "Kokinshiu" is full of poetic thoughts and has much beauty of style. One of its passages runs as follows: "The Poetry of Yamato has the human heart for its seed, and grows therefrom into the manifold forms of speech." For further extracts see W. G. Aston's "History of Japanese Literature."

Another work of Tsurayuki—the "Tosa Nikki"—is in the form of a diary written on his return to Kioto after completing his term of office as prefect there; it is dated the beginning of the year 935 A.D. During his stay at Tosa he lost his little daughter of nine years, and the Tanka following probably has reference to his bereavement.

TANKA FROM THE "TOSA NIKKI"

BY KINO TSURAYUKI

Drive us toward the glistening shell-strewn sand,
I would descend from out my ship, O waves!
"Shell of forgetfulness" * clasped in my hand,
Then shall my soul obtain the peace it craves—
Forgetfulness of all the longing vain
For her whose face I may not see again!

* Wasure-gai, shell of forgetfulness—name of a Japanese shell.

BROWN SAILS UPON THE SEA

It is the dawning of the Spring,
Yet does it seem to me
The brown leaves of the Fall
Scattered beyond recall
Float on the jewelled sea!

THE WILD GEESE

By Kino Tsurayuki

Unseen above me in the night,
Dark autumn night, they swiftly fly,
The wild geese on their southward flight.
While listening to their plaintive cry,
I think of old friends far away,
And muse if, as in olden days,
These birds some message might convey
From those who dwell in distant ways!

PLUM-BLOSSOM AND SNOW

By Kino Tsurayuki

Were but the plum-flowers scentless as the snow,
That softly falls upon the budding spray,
How could we tell the pure white blooms that blow
From the cold snowflakes, all alike as they,
Starring the brown boughs' tracery to-day ?

TANKA FROM THE "KOKINSHIU"

Compiled A.D. 905–922

REMEMBRANCE

Shall I forget thee ?
Not for that instant brief,
In which the lightning's blade
Lights up each ear of grain,
Each swaying stem and leaf,
When Autumn decks the plain
In rare brocade !

PLUM-BLOSSOM

In this Spring night
Of all-pervading grey,
No ray of light
Reveals the plum-tree's spray,
But viewless to the skies
Its perfumes still arise.

VANISHING

Even as this passing life of ours,
The cherry-blossoms fair display!
Scarce have we gazed, in fragrant showers
Of petals, from the wind-tossed spray,
The blossoms' beauties pass away!

THE LEAVES

See the red maple-leaves that swirl
In Autumn storm-winds! brief their span,
Into the outer dark they whirl!
More fleeting still the life of man.

THE TOMB

An ancient tomb, with withered shikimi,
Where the red dragon-flies flit to and fro!

THE DREAM

Before I slept, I thought of thee,
Then fell asleep, and sought for thee,
And found thee:
Had I but known 'twas only seeming,
I had not waked, but lain for ever dreaming!

SONG OF MIONOSEKI

Seki is a fair place and a lovely,
With glorious morning sun.
There, from the holy mountains
Softly the winds blow, softly !

PASSING

What of our life ! 'Tis imaged by a boat:
The wide dawn sees it on the sea afloat;
Swiftly it rows away,
And on the dancing waves no trace is seen
That it has ever been !

ILLUSION

That which we see in sleep,
Is that alone a dream ?
To me the world itself
Is not what it may seem,
But just a phantasy !

THE LIGHTNING

By Minamoto no Jun—10th Century

Out of the murky clouds the lightning's glare
Dimly reveals the brooding Autumn plain,

Shown for an instant in its 'broidery rare,
Then the dense darkness covers it again.

Such is our life, an instant in the light,
Then the Unknown, impenetrable night!

EVANESCENCE

By Minamoto no Jun

Even as the beads of evening dew that lie
Upon the morning-glory through the night,
And vanish ere the fading of the flower
With the day's dawning:
Such is human life!

THE SLEEVE

Unknown

Would that my sleeve were long and wide enough
To cover all the sky, and shelter thus
The fair Spring blossoms from the scattering wind!

DEW-SPRINKLED

By Minamoto no Jun

The tangled crowd of blossoms in the field,
Their mingled perfumes to the morning yield.
As I pass on, where fallen petals strew
The narrow path, with aromatic dew
My sleeve is wet and faded.

EVENING MISTS

By Minamoto no Jun

The lonely wanderer with dismay
Sees the dusk fall, as he pursues
His path towards the wane of day,
And mists begin to blot the views
And hide the Adzuma highway,
Where, clear to sight, a while ago
The folk were passing to and fro!

THE WHITE CLOUD

By Minamoto no Jun

The white cloud blown from the mountain-peak
Drifts lightly by;
Whither it goes we would vainly seek,
And know not why

The white cloud feels the breath of the wind,
A shuddering sigh :
Even thus is the life of a man
Who is born—to die !

THE FROGS AND THE KERRIA BLOOMS

The crying of the frogs comes hither,
Silent no longer, since they fear
To see the Yamabuki wither,
The golden blooms they hold so dear,
And now the heartless flowers
Make haste to disappear !

DAWN

(From the "Manyôshiu")

It is the Dawn, and I—
I cannot sleep, nor have the long night through,
For thoughts of her I love !
The cuckoo's weary cry,
Full of sad yearning, loud and louder grew,
And still though Day draws nigh,
It maddens me with lamentations new !

WISTARIA

(From the "Manyôshiu")

The pale mauve wavelets of wistaria,
Which I had planted by my dwelling-place
That it might bring me thoughts of thee I love,
At length are blooming : pure ethereal
As their own fragrance, fugitive and rare.

IN PRAISE OF SAKE

By Ōtomo no Yakamochi

Why talk of jewels ? Though by night
Their hearts with changeful colours shine,
Can they impart the deep delight
That lives within the golden wine
And drives away one's care ?

If in this Lifetime
My heart be light and joyous,
What does it matter
Though in the next existence
I change to bird or insect ?

THE LEGEND OF THE MURMURING FROM THE DRY BED OF THE RIVER OF SOULS

From Prose Version of Buddhist Wasau by Lafcadio Hearn

In the pale grey Land of Meido,
At the foot of Shidé mountain,
From the River of Souls' dry bed
  Rises the murmur of voices,
  The prattle of baby-voices,
  The accents of early childhood.

Not of this world is their sorrow,
Not as the crying of children
Heard on this earth, but how mournful!
  Plaint of their pitiful longing,
Yearning for home and for parents.
"Father! so longed for—O Father!
Mother belovéd, O Mother!"
  Wail from the River of Souls.

Sad is the task they endeavour,
Gathering stones from the river,
  Heaps for the Towers of Prayer.

Building the first Tower, and praying
The Gods to shower blessings on Father;
Piling the second, imploring
The Gods to shower blessings on Mother;
Heaping the third Tower, and pleading
For Brother and Sister, and dear ones.

Such day by day their employment.
Piteous, piercing the marrow
The tale of their sorrowful task.

But when the sunset approaches
Then appear demons, demanding
"What is this work you are doing?
Think you your parents still living
Care for your service or offering?
Hopeless they weep and bewail you,
Mourn for you, morning till evening.

Thus all the sorrows you suffer
Come from the grief of your parents
Resenting the will of the gods!
So blame not us, but your parents!"

Then the fierce demons demolish
The fruits of the little ones' labour.
Hurling the stones with their bludgeons,
Deaf to the wailing and tears.

Swift to the sorrowing children,
Jizō comes softly, "the Teacher,"
"Shining King"—beaming in pity,
Gently he comes to console them.

"Be not afraid, little dear ones,
You were so little to come here,
All the long journey to Meido!

I will be Father and Mother,
Father and Mother and Playmate
To all little children in Meido ! "

Then he caresses them kindly,
Folding his shining robes round them,
Lifting the smallest and frailest
Into his bosom, and holding
His staff for the stumblers to clutch.

To his long sleeves cling the infants,
Smile, in response to his smiling,
Glad in his beauteous compassion.

Jizō the Diamond of Pity !
Jizō the little ones' God !

CHERRY-BLOSSOM

Through the wild cherry-blooms that snow
Yamato's hills with petals fair,
The shining morning sun-rays glow:
Will you not come and see them there ?

THE FLOWERS

Outside my dwelling crickets sing,
Deep in the grass. And on the lea
The clover-bush is blossoming
In full perfection.—Come and see !

A PORTRAIT

Standing, her beauty holds,
The peony's white loveliness;
Seated, her robe enfolds
Charms that surpass in graciousness
The Botan * in its pride;
And when she walks in silk array,
Abashed the fragile poppies sway
In slender grace outvied.

NEW YEAR

By Ikuju

Pine-branch at the door
On the road to the unknown
A milestone marking,
To some a way of gladness,
To some a path of sorrow.

ONE AND MANY

The current of the stream unceasing flows,
But ever-changing are its waters cool.
The foam that, lingering, floats upon the pool
Now vanishes, now swiftly forms again,
And snow-like drifting on the surface shows.

* Tree Peony.

TRANSCIENCE

By Komachi

Swift fade the hues of hill and wold,
Glories of Spring and Fall depart,
More evanescent still, behold
The fading blossoms of the heart!

OLD SAMURAI PRAYER

May the Springs purely flow
And sickness cease;
May victory crown our House
And treasure-stores increase;
Evil no longer grow,
And all the world know peace!

ANCIENT WEDDING SONG

The waves are still on the four seas,
Soft blow the time-winds, yet the trees
Sway not, nor rustling foliage stirs.
In such an age blest are the firs
That meet and age together.
Nor heavenward look and reverent gaze,
Nor words of gratitude and praise
Our thanks can tell, that all our days
Pass in this age with blessings stored
By bounty of our Sovereign Lord!

AT SAKUSA

(VERSE ON THE GATE OF MIYA-YAEGAKI)

On the wild hills that tower to the sky,
There where they fell,
The dead leaves lie
In rustling heaps piled high,
There the gods dwell!

THE HILL OF MEETING

(AU-SAKA, LAKE BIWA)

BY SEMI-MARO

Known and Unknown, the stranger guest,
Returning friends whom comrades greet,
Up to the Hill of Meeting's * crest,
Press the wayfarers' eager feet.
For here the fateful Barrier stands,
And some will part—and some will meet.

SLUMBER SONG OF IZUMO

Sleep, baby, sleep!
On mountains steep

* The allusion is to the Octroi or Barriers formerly existing on the boundaries of the different provinces.

The children of the hare are straying.
Why are their soft brown ears so long and slender,
Peeping above the rocks where they are playing ?

Because their mother, ere they yet were born,
Ate the Loquat leaves in the dewy morn,
And the bamboo grass long and slender—
That's why the ears of baby-hares are long !
Sleep, baby, sleep ! to the lilt of my song !

CHILDREN'S SONGS

Butterfly Song

Butterfly, butterfly ! light upon the Na-leaf, pray !
Or if Na-leaf tempt you not,
On my hand alight and sway :
Hand and Na-leaf both are nigh—
Light upon one, butterfly !

Snail Song

Put out your horns for a little, snail !
The rain falls soft, and the wind blows warm,
And rustles the leaves of the bamboo grass.
Put out your horns, ere the showers pass,
For the rain falls soft, and the wind blows warm !

SIEGE SONG

To West and East
The Land is full of foes!
To North and South
The foeman's standard blows,
And countless as the pebbles on the sand,
From south of Tsukushi,
And Satsuma's wild strand,
Still gather foes!

Into the void
Of pathless space may fall
High Heaven itself—
The solid mountain's wall
Melt in the torrents.
Yet one thing is sure,
The Imperial Realm
Unshaken shall endure
Firm above all!

LOVER'S LAMENT IN THE EMPTY WESTERN PAVILION

(From the "Isé Monogatari," about 901–922)

Moon! it is gone, with all its charm sublime;
Spring! nay, the Spring of "Once upon a time"
Comes nevermore with blossoms in its train;
All else is changed—but I unchanged remain!

THE FROGS AT NIGHT

The croaking frogs that find their lodging here,
Would seem to feel the loneness of the night,
As well as I, so plaintive is their cry!

FUJI

By Arikoto

A thousand times I gaze upon thy form,
A thousand times—and each more wonderful!

Swift, with the drifting clouds, tumultuous storm,
The driving winds—so dost thou smile or frown—
Yet always beauteous, whether storm or shine,
O magic Mountain! Fuji the Divine!

THE SPRING WIND AND THE WILLOWS

By Tahira no Kanemori

The goddess of the Spring has spread
Upon the budding willow-tree
Her lovely mesh of silken strands:
O wind of Spring, blow lovingly
And gently, lest the willow thread
Entangled be!

THE SNOWFALL

(From the "Kokinshiu")

By Kujohara no Fukayabu

Midwinter gloom the earth enshrouds,
Yet from the skies
The blossoms fall
A flutt'ring shower,
White petals all!
Can Spring be come
So soon beyond the clouds?

ILLUSION

(From the "Kokinshiu")

By Sakanouhe no Korenori

In Yoshino at dawn meseemed
Around me paling moonlight gleamed,
But 'twas new-fallen snow that lay
Cold-shining in the light of day.

THE DESERTED GARDEN

By Biwa Sadaijin

Once more the garden that I loved I seek,
Where once the footsteps of my dear ones trod,
Now all deserted, desolate and bleak.
The brown leaf flutters to the frosted sod.
Only the maple-foliage as of old
Weaves its embroidery of red and gold!

CHERRY-BLOSSOM TIME

By Norinobu

All round the year, with careful pride,
My court-yard here is neatly kept,
Save at sweet cherry-blossom tide,
When 'tis untrodden and unswept.
White scented petals softly blow,
And, downward fluttering, create
A perfumed carpeting of snow,
Nor foot nor hand must desecrate.

AT THE END OF THE YEAR

By Harumichi no Tsuraki

One speaks of yesterday,
Lives through to-day,

And on the morrow
Hastening away
Like Asu's river,
Ceaselessly and fast,
The fleeting months and days
Are with the past.

JEWELS OF AUTUMN

By Fujiwara Kiyomasa

The varied grasses of the Autumn meads
Are gemmed with dewdrops, as with pure white beads,
Yet all unthreaded. As the grasses sway,
So, one by one, the dew-pearls slip away
And vanish from the radiance of the day!

DEW-DRENCHED AUTUMN LEAVES

Whence come these colours of the grass
That glorify the Autumn field?
The dew that glistens where I pass
One hue alone methought could yield,
Its crystal orbs no dyes can hold,
Yet the leaves change to red and gold!

SECLUSION

My humble dwelling, creeper-clad,
So lonely lies,
That day by day none visit me
Save the fire-flies !

THE OLD BATTLE-FIELD

By Yorihira

Evanescent as dew their existence,
These warriors of long-vanished ages ;
Of all their fierce contests and striving,
Lo ! the end is the Autumn wind sighing
Its dirge o'er the waste place of battle !

AUTUMN MOON THOUGHTS

I look upon the harvest moon to-night,
She lifts my soul upon her silver rays ;
My thoughts are tangled in a web of light
With vague reflections in a thousand ways.
Dreaming they wander in a world unknown,
Though Autumn's witchery is not mine alone !

THE WIND IN AUTUMN

The Autumn wind tightening its plaintive strings,
Plays a weird nocturne, that sad thought inspires.
And every gust new desolation brings
To my lone heart, a thrill of vain desires.

ILLUSIONS

Call not the frosted branches of the trees,
This winter morn, all desolate and bare!
While the snow lies unmelted upon these,
I think I see the white Spring-blossom there!

HAILSTONES

Would that this hail might shower, a sparkling
stream,
All the grey day, until the moon arise,
And shine upon this court, which then would
gleam
As though a rich-gemmed pavement dazed our
eyes—
White, glittering jewels, fresh from Paradise!

THE RIVERSIDE

The Tatsuta's clear waters redly flow
This placid eventide, whereby I know
On the high hills the maples flame afar,
And down the stream, a floating fiery star,
Drifts the red leaf in splendour. Yet alas!
To see the glory of the Autumn pass!

THE CUT CHRYSANTHEMUM

Who could have cut this fair chrysanthemum,
Regardless of its beauty as it grew
In nature's harmony of leaf and stem?
One who perchance has plucked it ere its prime,
Mistakenly, to save it from chill winds,
Or lest it perish in the heavy dew.

THE FIRST SNOW

In my black hair white threads begin to stray,
Gleam in the winter sunlight. Now I gaze
On the year's earliest snow with vague dismay:
Soon shall I see the winter of my days.

WHY?

It grieves me, on this Life to contemplate,
This Life that seems but as a summer cloud
In a vast sky—floats up, and drifts away,
Knowing no whence nor whither!

MIRAGE

I say not that this Life is pitiful,
Or that unending woe is mortals' lot,
For Life is but a mirage of the mind,
And who can say if it exist or not?

ACROSS THE HILLS

Who in the wild hills strays,
These late October days,
  A gift receives
Upon his shoulders laid—
A cloak of rich brocade
(Yet all unwoven)
  Of the maple leaves.

FALLEN LEAVES

At the tree's foot, with gorgeous colours fraught,
The scarlet maple leaves rest as they fell.
Where is the Autumn in whose hand was brought
That splendid foliage ? Rests she here as well
Under the mantle she herself has wrought ?

IN WINTER-TIME

My garden's fairest scenes, from now will show,
Susuki-grass-plumes, graceful bending low,
Under their burden of fresh-fallen snow !

FLOWERING GRASSES

By Motosuki

Flowering Susuki's many sleeves invite
  In this fair field a lingering stay,
But coldly turns the Autumn from their sight,
  And leaves the scene to Winter grey.

REJOICING

Bright gleam the buds a-shine against the blue,
While from green woods trills many a joyous voice.
All hearts are gladsome : must it not be true,
That " when the happy laugh the gods rejoice " ?

LIGHT OF DHARMAKÂYA

Many the paths that twist and wind
Through stream-cleft vale or forest maze ;
But those who reach the hill-top find
(Though they have climbed by different ways)
On the wide summit, clear and kind,
Just the same moonlight softly plays,
Shining on all with equal rays !

GHOST DRAGON-FLIES

At the brief home-returning of the dead,
Bright is the air with flashing dragon-flies,
Like gossamers at sunset shining red ;
The spirits' burnished steeds flit through the skies,
Each to its bourne, by viewless riders sped !

Note.—During the three days' festival of the dead—" Bon " (the Spirits of departed ancestors) are believed to be carried by dragon-flies to their old homes.

A PLAINT

As Autumn closes in, and fitful blows
The dreary wind, that passes moaning by,
My heart, already sorrow-laden, grows
Sadder to hear the wild geese pensive cry—
Leave me hereafter to my sad repose,
O kindly birds of passage! Come not nigh!

BROCADE

Fair goddess of the paling Autumn skies,
Fain would I know how many looms she plies,
Wherein through skilful tapestry she weaves
Her fine brocade of fiery maple leaves—
Since on each hill, with every gust that blows,
In varied hues her vast embroidery glows?

AT JIZŌ'S SHRINE

Fronting the kindly Jizō's shrine
The cherry-blooms are blowing now,
Pink cloud of flower on slender bough,
And hidden tracery of line.

Rose-dawn against moss-mellowed grey,
Through which the wind-tost sprays allow
Glimpse of calm smile and placid brow,
Of carven face where sunbeams play.

Dawn-time, I pluck a branch, and swift
Flutters a flight of petals fair;
Through the fresh-scented morning air
Down to the waving grass they drift.

Noon-tide my idle fingers stray,
Through the fair maze of bud and flower,
Sending a sudden blossom-shower
From the sweet fragrance-haunted spray.

Low in the west the red fire dies,
Vaguely I lift my hand, but now
Jizō is not—nor cherry bough—
Only the dark of starless skies!

THE BLOSSOM-OFFERING

By Hujyō

If I should pluck this fair flower blossoming,
I might defile its beauty with my hand,
So let it stay, ungathered where it grows.
I offer its unsullied loveliness
To Buddhas past, and present, and to come!

LATE CHERRY-BLOOM

By Shōni no Myōfu

Here, sheltered by the hill,
Lonely wild cherry still
I find in bloom.
Let not the wild wind know!
Or it will surely blow
And scatter this last trace
Of passing Spring!

TEARS

By Fujiwara Tada-Kuni

I thought that tears, the gems of Sorrow's crown,
Were human only, yet I see each blade
Of slender grass with shining drops weighed down;
White dewdrop tears, that glimmer in the shade;
Even the grass would seem all passion-filled,
As my own heart, with grief not to be stilled!

PERFUME AND BEAUTY

By Kawara no Sadaijin

I'll gather dewdrops from the cherry-trees,
And bathe me in their perfume through and through,

Ere yet there comes the rough and envious breeze
To carry off both flowers and fragrance too !

SEA-FOAM—FLOWERS OF THE SEA-WAVES

(Namino-Hana)

By Yasuhide

The wild flowers fade, the maple-leaves,
Touched by frost-fingers, float to earth ;
But on the bosom of the sea,
The flowers to which her waves give birth
Fade not, like blossoms of the land,
Nor feel the chill of Autumn's hand.

POVERTY

By Ransetsu

On a cold, snowy morning,
Somebody's child picking up,
With stiff, chilled fingers,
Empty tins in the street.

ISOLATION

By Isé

Cold as the wind of early Spring,
Chilling the buds that still lie sheathed

In their brown armour, with its sting
And the bare branches withering—
So seems the human heart to me!
Cold as the March wind's bitterness;
I am alone, none comes to see
Or cheer me in these days of stress.

SPRING DAYS AND BLOSSOM

When the Spring comes, in all green things that grow
New pulse of Life beats warmly, all aglow,
Long are the golden days.
Fragrant and moist the gentle zephyrs blow
Through the warm haze.
Why should the flowers alone make haste to go,
Swift to depart from us, who love them so?

OVER THE FENCE

By Isé

In summer-time awhile the breeze will bring
Over the fence a drift of petals fair,
From the next garden's cherry blossoming;
I would that rather the strong wind would bear
The tree itself in fragrant beauty there
Into my garden!

PASSING OF THE SPRING

I know all blooms must wither at the last—
Fair is their life, but limited and brief;
Yet when I see their fragile beauty past,
Filled is my heart with an unreasoning grief,
Through the unchanging pageant of the years
The passing of the Spring is sad to tears!

FADED HUES

By Motoyoshi no Mikō

Fair and unchanged in hue the flowers appear,
As in last Springtime, exquisite to see,
But one with whom I saw them bloom last year
Hath changed to me!

THE FROGS CROAKING

The croaking frogs that find their lodging here,
Would seem to feel the loneliness of night
As much as I, so plaintive is their cry
Through the long hours until the morning light.

CLOUD OF BLOSSOM

The stranger viewing from afar
Yoshino's far-famed cherry-trees,
Veiling each mountain crag and scar,
A soft white cloud is all he sees !

ABSENT

By Sugawara Adaijin

O cherry-blossom loved so well,
If you do not forget your lord,
Absent from you this April-time,
Send me your fragrant message, stored
In the safe keeping of the breeze,
Blowing towards me ! Flowers adored,
I think of you !

HOTOTOGISU—THE CUCKOO

By Sanesada

I hear the cuckoo calling,
Calling, while the dawn's cold dews are falling,
A lonely lullaby.
Yet when my eyes would seek her,

Nought can my gaze descry
But grey mists fainter growing,
But white moon ghostly showing
Pale in the morning sky!

HOTOTOGISU

None but the waning moon of morn
Heard the Hototogisu's cry
In anguish from her heart's-blood torn
Thrill upwards to the paling sky!

BROCADE OF AUTUMN

The Autumn Plain
Is robed in rich brocade,
With flowered pattern
Lavishly displayed.
Whence come those dyes
Of variegated hue?
Since crystal clear
And colourless the dew?

AUTUMN THOUGHTS

By Tachibane no Masato

In the chill Autumn breeze
A lonely insect weeping
Heavy dew-tears forlorn.
Tell me, what feelings sweeping
Through its heart, passion-torn,
Shake its frail frame with weeping ?

THE BARRIER AT NAKOSO

Gone is the barrier that of old
Had crossed my way,
But in its place my eyes behold,
As on I stray—
The wild winds sweep a scented cloud
Of fluttering petals from the cherry-trees—
Into the narrow pathway, where they crowd
Whirled by the breeze
And bid my footsteps stay.

THE DRAGON-FLIES

The gold sun shimmering in noontide skies
Shines down, where the red-burnished dragon-flies
Flit to and fro in the translucent haze
Over the village of eventless days!

CHERRY-BLOSSOM

By Tomonori—Early 10th Century

The cherry-blossom gleams, a pearly haze,
Across the landscape, far as eye can see,
Like mist-wreaths veiling in their shifting maze
Yoshino's mountain-gorges' mystery.

GLORY OF YOSHINO

By Teitoku

Would that some stranger hitherward would stray,
Unto whose wondering eyes I might display
The blossoms' glory in spring sunrise glowing,
Rose-pink of dawn upon a mist of grey,
Yoshino's cherries on her mountains blowing.

SAIGYŌ-HŌSHI

(*Born* 11—; *died* 1198)

A famous poet of noble birth. He was one of the pages at the Court of the Mikado. One day he parted with a fellow-page, saying good-bye cheerfully, and promising to call on him on his way to Court next day. The same evening Saigyō was surprised and horrified to hear of his friend's sudden death. This impressed him so much, that he left the Court and his companions, and his happy family, and became a monk, travelling through the country for many years, and composing many beautiful poems.

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS

By Saigyō—12th Century

Passing along the highway, when we see
The shadows of the willows floating cool
In a clear spring of water, then we pause
As fellow-travellers to rest awhile;
Loth to pass on, we linger.

AT ISÉ TEMPLE

By Saigyō

We know not what the Temple may enshrine,
Yet feel the influence of things divine,
And pray with grateful tears!

THE MOON-NIGHT

By Saigyō

The sadness of the moon-night fills my thoughts
With vague reflections of past hopes and fears.
Sad as the clouded moon my countenance
With eyes bedewed with tears.

THE SPRING

By Saigyō

The deep snow piled upon the mountain-peaks,
Melting, transforms the river's clear cascade
Into a foaming torrent whose white waves
Rush on their course resistless and unstayed.

AUTUMN EVENING'S LONELINESS

By Saigyō

Strong blows the evening wind and cool,
There where the marshlands silent lie,
Where the lone snipe stands by the pool,
Mirrored against a sullen sky.
Filled with compassion undefined,
Into my heart the silence steals.
To the vague loneness of the mind
The Autumn loneliness appeals!

A FRAGMENT FROM THE "HEIKE MONOGATARI"

(*c.* 1190–1332)

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

After the battle (naval) of Daimoura, A.D. 1185, between the Gen or Minamoto clan, under Yoshitsune, brother of the Shogun Yoritomo, and the Hei-Teira faction, the Mikado Antoku's nurse, on seeing the utter defeat of the Hei, took him, then a boy of eight, in her arms, and plunged with him into the sea, to avoid capture by the victorious Minamoto.

Note.—For the following, and for "The Bamboo Flute," I am indebted to prose versions in W. G. Aston's "Japanese Literature."

Then Niidono, the Mikado's nurse,
Seeing the hopeless fortunes of her Lord,
Flung o'er her head a sombre-coloured robe,
Under her arm placing the sacred seal
And on her thigh girding the sacred sword.
Then to her breast she clasped the child, and cried,
"Though but a feeble woman, yet no foe
Lays sullying hands on me! nor on my King!"
And calmly on the ship's side placed her foot.

Fair was his face, the Sov'reign whom she held;
Eight lovely springs above his head had passed,
His black locks clustered loosely on his neck,
And in his eyes there dawned a faint surprise.

"Whither wouldst take me, Amazé?" he cried.
Weeping, she turned and thus addressed the child:
"Dost thou not know, my Lord, that thou wert born
Ruler of full ten thousand chariots,
Since in thy previous life the Way was kept?
But now, the wheel of Fate turns back again,
And evil triumphs; thy good Fortune fails.
Turn thy august face, first towards the East,
Greeting the Shrine of Isé in farewell;
Then to the West, and call upon the Name
Buddha, the Lord of Light, All-Merciful,
Whose messengers will meet thee, as we cross
Into the blessed Regions of the West!"

Then the child tied to the Imperial robe,
Glowing with colours of the mountain dove,
His shining top-knot, tearfully he joined
His little lovely hands in simple prayer;
To Isé's shrine he turned, and Hachiman's,
Then to the West, calling on Buddha's Name.
Niidono then took him in her arms
And murmuring, "Beneath the waves there lies
Pure Land of Perfect Happiness," she sprang
From off the side, and sank in fathoms deep!
Alas! how pitiful! the winds of Spring
Scattered the beautiful, the flowery form!
Billows of severance remorseless roll
Above that gem of priceless sovereignty.

THE SHOGUN SANETOMO

(*Born* A.D. 1203; *died* 1219)

Son of the founder of the Shogunate, Yoritomo, of the House of Minamoto. He was assassinated at an early age, descending the steps of a temple, where he had been to return thanks for an additional title conferred on him by the Mikado. His assassin was High Priest of the Temple, and his nephew.

LOYALTY

BY THE SHOGUN SANETOMO

Though the high mountains should be rent apart,
Though dry the depths where now the deep seas roar,
Yet to my Lord I'll bear no double heart,
Still to my Prince be true for evermore!

PRESENTIMENT

(WRITTEN BY THE SHOGUN SANETOMO ON LEAVING HIS PALACE, PREVIOUS TO HIS ASSASSINATION)

If, issuing hence, I leave my dwelling-place
Untenanted—and coming days should bring
Its Lord no more, nor well-remembered face
Look on its halls, nor echoing footsteps ring—
Yet thou, loved Plum-tree, shadowing these eaves,
With boughs whose network fragile tracery weaves,
Forget not thou the Coming of the Spring!

TEIKA KYO

A nobleman of the thirteenth century, who compiled the "Hyaku-nin-Isshu," a collection of the ancient poems of Japan, which contains Tanka from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries. Compiled about A.D. 1235

AUTUMN EVENING BY THE SEA

By Teika

Lonely and desolate
Stretches the coast line.
Here and there thatched roofs
Of fishermen's dwellings.
Cold gleam the waters.
Nor soft hue of blossom,
Nor rich glow of maples,
To brighten the sadness—
But twilight autumnal!

THE DRAGON-FLY

By Chiyo *

(*Written after the Death of her little Son*)

How far, I wonder, did he stray,
Chasing the burnished dragon-fly to-day?

* Chiyo was a famous woman Hokku-writer of Kaga.

EXISTENCE

By Chiyo

All things that seem to be
But in one mind exist
And have their being.

THE MORNING GLORY

By Chiyo

All round the rope a morning glory clings;
How can I break its beauty's dainty spell?
I beg for water from a neighbour's well.

THE NIGHT

Though all is still,
Nor one faint breath from icy mountains blown,
Yet bitter chill
The night, since thou art gone, and I alone!

THE INFANT

Pitiful echoes the wailing,
Feeble wailing of infant,
Lonely and sad, and uncared for;

But at the stillness of midnight
Suddenly ceases its crying.
Dream-like the dead mother passes
Swift to the side of her babe,
Bends o'er it, holding it safely,
Suckles it, murmuring softly
Whispers of mother-love.

KAMO NO CHŌMEI

Kamo no Chōmei, the author of that charming little classic the "Hōjōki," written in A.D. 1212, was guardian of the Shintō shrine of Kamo in Kioto. He was appointed by the retired Mikado Go Toba to a post in the Department of Japanese Poetry. Being refused the succession to his father as superior guardian of Kamo, he retired to a hermitage on Oharayama, near Kioto. He is the author of several essays on poetical subjects, and many poems.

THE MOONRISE

By Kamo no Chōmei

Neither at twilight nor at grey of dawn,
Would I appear the sacred West to spurn,
Yet at this evening hour am I forsworn!
Though in the West the lingering glories burn,
Lo! in the East I watch with reverent eyes,
Through purple mist, the full-orbed moon arise!

How can I help it! Though my face I turn
From the blest Regions * to the Eastern skies.

THE MOON AND THE RIVER

By Chōmei

Since bright and clear the little river winds
  Over its shining pebbles to the sea,
The fair moon seeks its limpid stream and finds
  A mirror for her radiant purity.

MOONLIGHT ON THE PINE-TREES

By Chomei

Here, while I stand alone,
Shadows mysterious thrown
By the dark mountain pines
    Lie at my feet.
At the clear moon I gaze,
Muse in a thousand ways
On what my soul divines
    Dimly of life.

* The West Region of the Buddhist Paradise.

THE FALLEN MAPLE-LEAVES

By Chōmei

The scattered maple-leaves are blown
From wooded hill and mountain-side,
And in a rich confusion thrown,
Mass in the valley far and wide.
Hushed is the little streamlet's tone
By the red splendour on its tide.

BRIGHT MOON IN AUTUMN

Unknown

The frosty moonlight cold and white
Shines it so clear, that we may see
Each maple-leaf float from its tree,
And weave a perfect tapestry
In silence of the Autumn night ?

THE BUTTERFLY

By Arakida Moritake (1472–1549)

Where the soft drifts lie
Of fallen blossoms, dying,
Did one flutter now,
From earth to its own brown bough ?

Ah, no! 'twas a butterfly,
Like fragile blossom flying!

WHITE CHRYSANTHEMUMS

By Ochikochi no Mitsune

'Tis hard indeed to choose which bloom to pluck
Of all these gleaming white chrysanthemums,
So thickly spangled with the earliest frost!

THE MORNING GLORY

By Matsunaga Teiloku (1564–1645)

Brief be my life as Heaven wills;
Give me, O gods, the true heart of a flower;
The morning-glory who fulfils
Her perfect destiny within the hour,
With the same energy that thrills
The sturdy fir-trees that for centuries tower!

SIESTA

By Matsunaga

'Tis now the season of the Harvest Moon.
Men gaze the livelong night, and sow the seed
That brings a sweet siesta on the morrow!

KEICHIU

A.D. 1640–1701

A Priest whose reputation as a scholar attracted the attention of the famous Daimio of Mito, Mitsukuni, who caused a vast library to be collected and maintained scholars for researches which resulted in the compilation of the Dainihoushi = "History of Japan."

THE COMING OF SPRING

By Keichiu

The Spring hath bent its magic bow;
The heavens eterne, the earth below
Rich with its hidden ore, are veiled
In mist-wreaths grey.
High on the mountain-ledge the snow
Melts, and once-frozen ponds o'erflow
This first Spring day.
The plum-trees' branches gently sway;
From the young blossoms' fair array
The nightingale trills forth her song
So tender-sweet.

Now memories of the bygone year
Fade in our hearts, new joys appear
Our hopes to greet.

When can we to the meadows pass,
To pluck the herbs among the grass ?
When will the budding willows flame
In living gold ?
When will the cherry-blossoms glow ?
To-day, in minds of high and low,
These thoughts unfold !

BASHŌ

He lived at the close of the 17th century, and is described by Professor Chamberlain as "acknowledged master of the seventeen-syllable style," and his poems as "full of flashes of delicate fancy," "specks of humour, truth and wisdom." He belonged to an ancient Samurai family, retainers of the Daimio of Tsu-Isé. He became a Buddhist priest, a student of the Zen doctrines, and was an artist as well as poet. He took journeys into the secluded parts of Japan, and there inscribed many poems on stones, some of which still remain.

CONTRASTS

By Bashō

The Autumn gloaming deepens into night;
Black 'gainst the slowly-fading orange light,
On withered bough a lonely crow is sitting !

THE FULL MOON

By Basho

Ah! this full moon! Would I could knock to-night
At sacred Müdera's ancient gate,
Bathed in the misty radiance of her light.

THE POND

By Bashō

An old-time pond, from out whose shadowed depth
Is heard the plash where some lithe frog leaps in!

SAKURA

Cherry-blossoms of Yoshino,
These and these only!
Unsurpassed in loveliness
Yoshino's peerless blossoms!

A SKETCH

A cloud of blossom
Far and near;
Then sweet and clear,

What bell is that
That charms my ear ?
Ueno ?
Asakusa ?

MOTOORI NORINAGA

He was born A.D. 1730 at Matsuzaka-Isé. One of the great names of Japanese literature. He was a pupil of Mabuchi. He was chiefly instrumental in restoring Shintō to its original supremacy, and revived interest in the ancient literature. His works are numerous, one of the greatest being the Commentary on the Kojiki, in forty-four volumes, which is an encyclopedia of ancient literature.

YAMATO-DAMASHÜ (SOUL OF JAPAN)

By Motoori

O sacred Isles ! Would strangers know
The Spirit of Yamato's hero race ?
Point where the cherry-blossoms blow,*
Veiling the rugged mountain's frowning face.
Sun-flushed and heavenly fair,
Scenting the morning air !

* The wild cherry-blossom—*yama-zakura*—is, in Japan, the emblem of the warrior, ready to die for Emperor and country, in the full vigour of life and beauty, as the petals of the Sakura blossom flutter, still lovely and fragrant, to the earth.

THE BAMBOO FLUTE

By Shiroi Uko

(From "Hana Momiji," 1898)

Part I

Under the shadow of the ancient firs
That clothe with sombre green the craggy height,
Again the hush of mystic silence stirs:
Whose bamboo flute speaks music to the night?
Is it some sun-bronzed fisher-lad would sigh
For other joys than those his work-day world,
Bitter with salt and seaweed, can supply—
So pours his soul in music to the sky?

Night after night he seeks the fir-grove's shade;
To the vague moonbeams filtering from above,
To the dense darkness, or the stars displayed,
Still sound those yearning cadences of love.
And first the fisher's flute was heard to play,
When a whole day had passed since courtiers proud
Of our great Lord had wandered by this way,
And the long night their revelry held sway.
They wandered forth upon the beach, the night
Rang with keen wit, and laughter unsubdued,
The while upon her course of crystal light
The Autumn moon's fair barque her course pursued.

A day had passed, since ladies of our Lord,
Mooring their pleasure-barge, in revel gay,
Tuned all their golden lutes in sweet accord
With the wind's song that through the fir-tops soared.

Part II

On nights when the dew fell coldly
On the reeds of the sullen shore,
He came—and his flute sang boldly
To the waves, and the swirling roar
Of the winds of the pines, in the distant crags
As its fierce gusts downward tore.

On nights when the hail beat wildly
And the waves on the beach ice-bound,
He came—and his flute sang mildly,
Subdued with a mournful sound.

On nights when the rain poured madly
And merged with the sea's weird moan,
He came—and his flute sang sadly,
Languid and faint of tone.

Part III

Changed has the Autumn-moon to-night,
So long his love endures,

And still with ever-new delight
The bamboo flute allures.

With the wild storm's acclaim,
Troubled its notes became;
Echoes from pine-trees blown,
Clear grew its liquid tone;
Mad with the maddened sea,
Frenzied its song would be!
Stifled with rocks wave-swept,
Dully its slow notes crept.

Even the cloud that floats
Over Onoyé stayed,
Listening to silver notes,
Then to some fainter played.
What wonder, there descends
From the high bower
Some one absorbed in thought
At this still hour!

Awhile the flute had ceased to pour
Its importunities to earth and sky;
But hark! how, louder than before,
The music of the bamboo thrills on high.

Now a new harmony the air pervades,
And in accord, how sweetly! with the flute;
Clear as the trill of warbler in the glades
Ring the soft accents of a golden lute!

Sometime the clouds from Onoyé descending
From the pine-scented rocks beneath them bore,
On their wide wings, the sweet musicians, tending
To those fair seas whereon, with altered helm,
The moon's fair barque steered straight towards them, wending
Her course eternal to the eternal Realm.

BUSHIDŌ

(*Rendered into English by* S. UCHIDA, ESQ.)

BY TENSHU NISHIMURA

Our Sunrise Land hath been from ancient times
Founded on valour, built on chivalry.
Three sister-virtues, moulded into one,
Wisdom, and Courage, and Humanity:
These laid the corner-stone, and reared the frame,
Yamato's Spirit, and her "warrior-way"!

Three heav'nly gifts to our Imperial Line
Have been the source and sign of our ideal:
The polished Mirror, emblem of the mind,
The keen-edged Sword, for valour's dauntless heart,
The precious Gem, for human kindliness.
These treasures three have long in symbol taught
The threefold virtue of the warrior-way!

Wisdom dwells oft in warriors, and therewith
Courage to face alone a thousand men !
But dull is wit and brutal bravery
That knows not mercy—source of all true deeds.
For even war at last doth serve her ends,
The people's safety. So the saying is,
" Who knows not pity is no warrior ! "
Behold the men, whom deep we reverence,
As showing forth our country's " Knightly Way."

The elder Kusunoki wise and brave,
And yet withal so sweet compassionate,
That o'er the grave of vanquished enemies
He read the service for departed souls.

Like him, his son the brave Masatsura,
When there came word of his advancing foes.
('Twas in the frost of Autumn's latest moon),
Undaunted by their greater force he led
His horsemen resolutely to the field.

Raising their shouts of war, the armies met,
Fierce surged the wave of battle up and down.
Here, with a merry song upon his lips,
Enters a valiant youth amid the fray ;
Yonder a priest in arms, a giant form,
His ten-foot spear propped on his stallion's neck,
Charging across the field to right and left,
Lays six-and-thirty horsemen on the ground.

The clanging sabres echo to the skies !
The foaming war-steeds shake the very earth !

With seven wounds from deadly sword and spear,
The foemen's Leader turns, his men with him,
And madly spur their weary steeds to flight,
Till, hot-pursued and pressed, their vanguard crowds
Into the turbulent November stream :
Five hundred perished in the river there.

At such a time no idle pity serves !
Compassionately then Masatsura
Came to the rescue of his drowning foes,
And brought them safe to land, dressing their wounds,
And warmed and fed them in his kindly camp,
Until, with crown of knightly courtesy,
He sent them forth, all mounted and with arms.
Both friend and foe acclaimed his nobleness !

Then was there too that Chief of Satsuma
Who from Korea came in triumph home,
And raised a stone in memory of the dead,
Or friend or foe—and made his offerings
That thus their souls might find the way to peace.

Such are the men whom warriors emulate,
Such too the meaning of the Cross of Red—
Emblem of love in lands beyond the sea.

Ah ! human kindness hath been from of old !
And such the Truth our ancient " Knightly Way "
Hath handed down to us in every age.

O precious Truth bound with our country's life !
Now is the time for warrior souls to rise !
Now is the time for warlike zeal to glow !
As mirror, sword and gem have taught our land,
Of wisdom, valour and humanity ;
This threefold glory of our chivalry,
O Nation ! keep unsullied as of old !

Still let our country's honour sound abroad !
Still let our country's glory shine afar !

LOYAL UNTO DEATH

At the Battle of Nanshan an officer lay dead with what seemed a bit of towelling wound round his head. It proved to be the Sun-Flag of Japan, which he had thus preserved from capture in the Russian trenches. When it was unwound, the following lines, stained with blood, were found written by the hand of the dead hero.*

Though our life vanish with the morrow's dew,
O Sovereign Prince ! yet loyally and true
Thy Standard still, for ever shall we guard !

* From Bennet-Burleigh's " Empire of the East."

LITERARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF H.I.M. THE EMPEROR AND H.I.M. THE EMPRESS

Both the Emperor and Empress of Japan are highly accomplished in the art of Poetry. His Imperial Majesty is said to devote a part of every evening to the writing of Tanka, and has composed many thousand thirty-one-syllable odes. The Empress also is considered by poetic experts to show particular talent in these compositions. Every New Year a certain theme is chosen by His Imperial Majesty, on which Emperor, Empress, and other high personages write odes. The whole nation, irrespective of rank, is invited to compete and send in compositions by a certain date. The Master of the Court Composers then makes a selection of the best and reads them before their Imperial Majesties. Afterwards the selected odes have the high honour of appearing in the Government *Gazette* with those of the Emperor, Empress, and other distinguished personages.

LINES WRITTEN BY H.I.M. THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN DURING THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

The night is dark and long,
Mosquito's shrilling song
  And petty stings
Persistent, break my rest,
And sleep forsakes my brow.

. . . . . .

Under the chill night sky,
On what dark field may lie
  My soldiers now!

IN TIME OF PEACE

By H.I.M. The Emperor

Peace rules Our country, and Our people there
Greet the delights the budding year can bring.
I too am happy since my heart can share
My people's pleasure in the joys of Spring!

FUJI

By H.I.M. The Emperor

Glorious is Fuji's summit, shining white
Into the rare and cloudless morning blue;
Let us attain the same majestic height
In our hearts' aspirations, noble, true!

THE SHRINE

By H.I.M. The Empress of Japan

Into the frosty night the deep-toned bell
Thrills, with a sad, heart-penetrating sound,
From the far Temple precincts, wherein dwell,
Through the chill darkness, solemn and profound,
The faithful Guardians of the Sacred Shrine,
Watching through silent hours the place divine!

THE RIVER

By H.I.M. The Empress

A people's heart restrained too sternly
May overflow and burst all barriers,
As the heart of a river, overflowing,
Swells, and sweeps away all boundaries.

IN SPRING

By H.I.M. The Empress

When in the Spring I pass through mountain
ways,
I see camellia blooms all scattered lie
In dewy beauty on the paths. A haze
Of drizzling rain obscures the weeping sky!

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF JAPAN

("KIMI GA YO")

Through countless ages yet unborn,
Still may our Lord's Dominion last,
Till by each streamlet, water-worn,
The tiny pebbles that each morn
Scarce in the sunlight shadows cast,
Grow into boulders, mossy, vast! *

OR, LITERAL TRANSLATION:

May our Lord's Empire
Live, through a thousand ages,
Till tiny pebbles
Grow into giant boulders
Covered with emerald mosses!]

* The words of the Anthem are part of a very ancient Uta, alluded to in the preface to the "Kokinshiu." The author is unknown. It was put to the present music, I understand, by a French (?) musician attached to the Imperial Court, about twenty years ago.

ENVOY

THE EAST TO THE WEST

(Remarks of a Japanese Scholar rendered into verse from Lafcadio Hearn's "Unfamiliar Japan")

You, of the West, still ask the "Eternal Why?"
Probing the mist-wreaths of religious thought.
We, of the East, have sounded depth on depth,
Only to find beneath the deeper depths
Still others, dark, unfathomed and profound!
Out to the farthest limits thought can reach,
Through Buddhism we voyaged—but to see
Ever the far horizon, far recede.
As children playing by a little stream,
Familiar with the still dark pools that lie
Beneath the willows, and the flattening whirl
Of waters, a sharp gust sends shivering by,
And all the noisy babble over stones,
With the white foam of miniature cascades.
These for a thousand years you played with, knew—
But of the bourne to which that streamlet runs
Knew not. And only now, by winding paths
Different to ours, you reach the Ocean's shore,
And stand like startled children, all amaze!
To you, the vastness is a wonder new,
And you would sail to—nowhere—since you saw
The Infinite across the sands of Time!

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